

122 the matter. The mayor was happily married to an attractive wife,
159 who dressed *po modata* (in the latest fashion) and kept her children
so neat and proper that they contrasted vividly with the peasant
urchins who ran up and down the unpaved streets.

625 The mayor was charged with maintaining law and order with
159 the help of the *strazhar* (police officer), the field policeman, and
622 the forest policeman. The second wandered from field to field to
see that cattle did not stray unattended onto strips where there were
growing crops; the forest policeman prevented the purloining of
wood from the forest lands used by Dragalevtsy people. The mayor
also acted as local justice of the peace, and was *ex officio* member
of the school board, health board, and any other village organization
he considered worthy of serious attention.

793 But the mayor, although he enjoyed the spotlight, had to share
622 it with the village priest. For five centuries, while the Bulgarians
were subject to the Turks, the priest was often the only person in a
village with any formal education. He not only interpreted the laws
of God, but the laws of man as well. The Bulgarian monks and
priests helped keep the feeling of Bulgarian nationality alive during
those dark days, and thereby eventually aided in the achievement of
national independence in 1878 at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish
[554] War. Since traditions die slowly in a Bulgarian village, the position
of the priest is still very high, although few people attend religious
services and fewer people observe the rather rigid fasts of the Eastern
Orthodox Church. However, the priest is an essential officiant at
christenings, weddings, and funerals. Without him the peasants have
no way of meeting life's major crises.

159 Father Sava was the *sveshtennik* or priest in Dragalevtsy. He
793 wore with dignity his long black gown and high brimless hat, his
581 uncut red hair in a knot at the back of his head, and a long auburn
beard. I never failed to marvel at his wide range of interests. One
day we would poke around his beehives; the next day he would show
me his favorite photographs and competently discuss the relative
merits of American and German cameras. But it was after I learned
of the man's romance that I began to see him in a clearer light. The
young lady whom he wanted to marry was the daughter of a priest

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR VILLAGE

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who flatly decreed that his daughter could marry no one but a priest. 159
 (Not only are priests well provided for financially, but they can marry 793
 only once. This means that they supposedly take exceptionally good 521
 care of their mates.) Sava had already completed the commercial
 gymnasium, had studied for two years in a school for leaders of co-
 operatives, and planned to attend the university. In order to comply
 with the demands of his sweetheart's father, however, he interrupted
 his educational plans long enough to prepare himself for the eccle-
 siastical examinations, which he passed with credit. He was then
 assigned to the Dragalevtsy parish. Meanwhile he had married the
 young lady of his choice. Soon thereafter he obtained leave of absence
 from his church responsibility in order to complete his work in
 Finance at the Svoboden (Private) University in Sofia. He was
 highly respected by the people whom he shepherded and was vitally
 interested in their welfare.

There were often two or three kibitzers while the intelligentsia 557
 played cards. These were lesser officials interested in advancement,
 or well-to-do peasants who wanted to hobnob with the controlling
 group. None of these hangers-on had been westernized to the point [291]
 of wearing a tie, and some of them still wore the heelless, pointed
 pigskin sandals.

Oddly enough for a Bulgarian village, the veterinarian and 759
 physician were both women, who constantly found the patriarchal 562
 traditions stumbling blocks to the winning of village support. The
 medical doctor was a Russian who had spent part of her childhood in
 San Francisco, but returned to the University of Petrograd for her
 medical training. After the Revolution she left Russia with her
 family.

The only other "educated" people in the village were the 875
 teachers, eight in number, selected for their posts by outside school
 authorities rather than by the villagers themselves. Four of the eight
 had been born outside the pre-Hitler boundaries of Bulgaria, in terri-
 tories which irredentist Bulgarians sought to recover permanently.
 Maria, for example, was from Dobruja, which was then a part of
 Rumania; Anna and Georgi were born in parts of Macedonia which



"But the mayor, although he enjoyed the spotlight, had to share it with the village priest." See page 10.

[Facing p. 12]

763 the soldiers and told them that he would not return from the fight. He
787 was sure of this because he had dreamed of a snake during the night.
Sure enough, he was killed in the action that followed.

If a person dreamed of a wedding or that he was leading a *boro*, death was probable; or if he dreamed of having a tooth pulled, the same held true. If he dreamed that he saw a deep black hole (similar to a grave), someone connected with him would die; if it was white inside, somebody else would die; if he fell into the hole, he would die.

764 In Dragalevtsy there were certain old women who considered themselves specialists in the preparation of the body for burial. They were "priestesses of superstition" who saw to it that all the pagan rites were carried out before the priest arrived to conduct the funeral. Their presence at any crisis showed the duality of the peasants' view of the universe.

771 God was thought to be the force symbolizing the Good. The
793 priest was His representative and should be given due respect; furthermore, he should be asked to perform all of the customary ceremonies such as the sprinkling of holy water in every room of the house at Bogoyavlenie or Epiphany on the nineteenth of January. Keeping on the good side of the priest meant keeping on the good side of God, whose favors one needs both in this life and the next.

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754 Inasmuch as they believed in a principle of Good at work in the universe, it was logical for the peasants to believe in a principle of Evil which could do them harm, with or without the consent of the Good. Some parts of the church ceremonies, such as spitting over the child at the devil during the christening, were directed at nullifying the efforts of the Evil One. Seeing that the church concerned itself chiefly with the Good, the peasant in his naivete felt compelled to do something to ward off the Evil, and thus perpetuated many primitive customs which startle both educated Bulgarians and those westerners who are not familiar with the equally primitive customs found within certain areas of their own supposedly civilized lands.

754 The intermediaries in this "cult of the Evil Eye, Devil, Bad Luck"
789 were certain old women, called *babi*, already described in the account of a village birth.¹ These women showed people how to keep the Evil Eye away. They advised mothers whose babies were only one

¹ [See pp. 30-31, Category 116-- Analyst]

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"Even the priest was a government employee . . ." See page 163.

[Facing p. 160]

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toward the East stayed. It became solidly rooted when in the ensuing years he patterned the organization of his State after Byzantium and introduced to Bulgaria adaptations of Byzantine law, such as the "Statute of Trial of Men", the "Nomocanon", etc.

• [793] The new church strongly tended to emancipate itself from the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople and rid itself of Byzantine clergy. A fortunate chance presented itself when an alphabet was devised to suit the peculiarities of the Slavic tongues. A wave of Slav awakening hit Bulgaria during the reign of Boris' son, Simeon I, and soon scriptures and prayer books, in Bulgarian, displaced the media of Byzantine influence. The process was so rapid and his military victories so promising that Simeon proclaimed the archbishop of Preslav a patriarch independent of the Patriarch of Constantinople and himself Csar of the Bulgarians and the Greeks. Seven bishoprics were established, of which those of Preslav and Ochrida (Macedonia) became important centers of enlightenment.

Bulgaria turned again toward Rome in the 13th century. Desirous of international recognition which had been lost during the Byzantine domination of Bulgaria (1018 - 1186), the Bulgarian King Kaloyan contacted the Pope with an offer to accept the Pope's primacy over the Bulgarian church in exchange for an imperial crown. In 1204, a Catholic cardinal arrived at the Bulgarian capital Tirmovo to hand a crown to Kaloyan on behalf of the Pope and ordain a Bulgarian prelate. This Western orientation caused by the Crusades and dictated by political expediency was rather short-lived. In 1232, Kaloyan's successor, Ivan Asen, denounced

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The conflict was aggravated when the Patriarchate refused to recognize the Statute of Exarchate drafted by the Bulgarian Church Council. One of the objectionable points was the new method of filling the positions in the hierarchy of the Bulgarian Church. All prelates in the Bulgarian lands were hitherto appointed by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Under the Statute of the Exarchate the Bishops were to be elected by the dioceses, and the Exarch, by the highest dignitaries of the Church with the participation of representatives of the laymen.

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The refusal of the Patriarchate to recognize the Exarchate and its Statute provoked a schism, or split, between the Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church. This split, between the Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church. This split lasted until 1945 when a reconciliation was negotiated and achieved.

In spite of the fierce opposition of the Greek clergy and the Patriarchate in Constantinople, the Bulgarian regions (Danube province with the capital in Ruschuk, and Nishava province with the capital in Nish), as well as most of Macedonia and Thrace, voted to submit themselves to the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate. An Exarch was elected by the Bulgarian Church Council, and with the consent of the sublime Porte established his seat in Constantinople.

This unique plebiscite, which emancipated the Bulgarian nation from Greek ecclesiastic domination, became

Princedom preserves its link with the Ecumenical Eastern Church in all matters concerning the dogmas of the faith.

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The opening phrase suggests that the Bulgarian Church is something of a higher authority than the State authority of the Princedom of Bulgaria. However, this has never been observed and the Bulgarian State has always striven to control the Church. There existed, however, an apparent linkage and close cooperation between the Church and State.

In the broad sense of the term the Church was a state institution and its officials, agents of the public authority.* The budget of the Church was part of that of the State, viz., of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Denominations, which represented the state in all religious matters. All bishops, priests and administrative employees in the various parishes and dioceses received from the government modest salaries which supplemented their income from fees received for religious rites and services performed by them. Aside from that, the churches, and especially the monasteries, disposed for their subsistence, of valuable properties, such as fields, forests, or buildings, either bought by them or willed to them by parishioners. All that netted a sizable income.

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* Ivan Altinov, Divroco in Bulgaria: Brakorazvodnite Conflicti v Bulgaria (Sofia, 1929), p. 9.

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These revenues, even though they were affected to some extent by the land reforms of the Agrarian Government of Alexander Stambeliiski, not only met all needs not fully covered by the State Budget, but enabled the Church to erect quite monumental buildings. The most remarkable of these were the Palace of the Holy Synod, the two seminaries in Plovdiv and Sofia, the Divinity Academy (which was accepted by the University of Sofia as a theological faculty) and last but not least, the Archbishopal Palace in Sofia, of which Archbishop Stefan, later elected Exarch of the Bulgarian Church, had said that it was "a small Versailles".

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The Church did not take part in the management of State affairs, since it officially did not mix in politics; but it always supported the State, always willing to bless the latter's public functions with religious ceremonies. National holidays were celebrated with a Te Deum at which the local bishop officiated, together with the prescribed number of priests. All consecrations were performed before the eyes of the people by representatives of the Church, bishops or priests --as the occasion required.

Customarily the National Assembly upon its official opening began its work by attending a religious ceremony (blessing of the water) at which the Archbishop of Sofia swore in the deputies. In general, oaths of ministers of state, deputies, officials, soldiers, and witnesses in court were always administered by clergymen. It may be said that nothing

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evidence was not sufficient, the court could order a temporary separation of the parties with the recommendation that they themselves explore all possibilities of reconciliation. Only after all such possibilities had been exhausted did the court grant the divorce.

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C. Religious Instruction and
Training of Priests

Religious instruction in public schools and theological training of priests were conducted in a manner different from that used in many other countries. The Bulgarian Church did not operate any denominational schools open to all. For a period of time it had no special schools for training of the priests, and, finally, religion was not always taught at public schools by clerics. Special schools for the training of future priests became definitely established only after the Exarchate came into being and in some respect were under the supervision of the State.

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After the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate and especially after the Bulgarian State was restored, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church took measures to raise the cultural standard of its hierarchy. Until then its higher dignitaries had been instructed first at the Greek Theological Academy on the island of Halki (one of the Princely Isles off Constantinople in the Marmara Sea) and later (after 1878), in Moscow, the corresponding centers in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria-Hungary (mainly at Czernowitz in Bukovina). To carry out its

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training program the Church founded two theological schools. one in Samokov (1883) which later (1903) was moved to Sofia for the Principdom of Bulgaria and one in Constantinople for the Bulgarian inhabitants of Thrace and Macedonia which, after the Balkan Wars, was moved to Plovdiv. Later, in 1917, a Theological Academy was opened at Sofia and soon (1921) transformed into a Theological College at the University of Sofia, making it possible for the graduates of the theological schools to receive higher theological education and qualify for episcopal posts.

It must be emphasized, however, that both the theological schools and the theological college, which were subsidized by the State, were administered by the Holy Synod only in purely religious matters; their curricula were under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. The theological schools gave their students not only a theological education but also, a general one as well, which made them equivalent to secondary schools. Hence, those graduates of the theological schools who did not wish to pursue an ecclesiastical career could select another field of study at the University. Thus, ex-theological students were to be found in all professions. Some became politicians and Statesmen, as, for instance, was the case of the distinguished leader of the Peasant Union, Dimitr Guitcheff presently imprisoned by the communist regime. This was possible only because the ecclesiastical education was as broad as public education in public schools.

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A certain amount of religious instruction was given in the primary and secondary schools, religious history being included in the curriculum. However, these subjects were not taught by clerics but by the laymen, in most cases graduates of the theological schools. Clerics served as instructors in the secondary schools only in the first years after the establishment of the Bulgarian State when the demand for educators exceeded the available number of teachers.

IV. Status of the Bulgarian Church Developments Since 1944

A. General Survey

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The seizure of power on September 9, 1944, by the Communist-dominated Fatherland Front coalition signaled important changes in the position of religion and the religious denominations. Ideologically, the dominant Bulgarian Communist Party was committed to a negation of all religion as the "opium for the masses". Practically, its policy toward religion and the Orthodox Church in particular was determined by more realistic considerations.

The communists could only desire to destroy the relationship established between the State and the Church. Likewise, they could not but desire to reduce and if possible, to destroy the great freedom which the Constitution of 1879 granted to the minority denominations allowing them to "be

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then had been conducted in all schools, to the removal of the presence of church officials at the taking of the oath and to the introduction of civil marriage, which became obligatory, instead of the religious one, which hitherto was required (Articles 1 and 2 of the Decree having force of Law concerning Marriage, Darzhaven Vestnik, No. 108, May 12, 1945).

Although there was no formal declaration of the separation of Church and State, representatives of the church no longer appeared at public functions and the part which the church played in public life was mutely but radically reduced.

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Nevertheless, the government continued to subsidize the church by allotting funds to it in the State budget. Moreover, in a purely political move, it amended the Statute of the Exarchate with a special Decree-Law (Darzhaven Vestnik, No. 11, January 15, 1945) and authorized the election of an Exarch. Apparently the government preferred to deal in the future with one man - the Exarch - instead of a Synod. Again the Bulgarians were always strongly in favor of having a single prelate at the head of their national church.

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In January 1945 Archbishop Stefan of Sofia was elected Exarch of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. The new Exarch was an ardent Russophile, but not a bolshevik or communist sympathizer. Immediately after the election he journeyed to Moscow to pay a visit to the Moscow Patriarch, Alexis, which demonstrated a recognition of the primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate, and sent a delegation to the Patriarchate of Constantinople to negotiate for the removal

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of the schism which separated the Bulgarian Church from the Constantinople Patriarchate since 1871 (see supra, I). Presumably, the Soviet authorities expected the Russian Orthodox Church to restore the Russian religious influence throughout the Orthodox world. To carry out this mission the Patriarch of Moscow announced a journey to the Holy places and the adjoining countries in the Near East. The Bulgarian Exarch was expected to visit the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople to demonstrate the lifting of the schism and meet the Russian Patriarch there for a demonstration of the latter's primacy over the Orthodox world. An affirmation of the Russian religious protectorate over the Eastern Orthodox nations in the Orient was planned as the preliminary step to the expansion of soviet political influence in that area.

This plan for concerted action, however, failed in its implications because the Turkish Government became highly alarmed by the announcement of Patriarch Alexis' journey. Under its influence the Patriarchate of Constantinople asked the Patriarch of Moscow to postpone his visit. The Bulgarian Exarch for his part achieved the removal of the schism by the Patriarchate of Constantinople whose jurisdiction had already been reduced to a few dioceses in and around the former Ottoman capital. The reconciliation between the two churches took place on February 23, 1945, and in October of the same year Exarch Stefan paid a visit to the Patriarch of Constantinople to inaugurate the reconciliation between the two churches.

However, as a result of a rather complex political development (see Appendix A) the Holy Synod deposed on the

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• 793 communist initiative the Exarch in 1948. He was banished to a remote villa in the province town of Karlovo. At the present time the Bulgarian Church is again administered by the Holy Synod.

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The general principles of the communist policy toward religion were finally embodied in the so-called "Dimitrov Constitution" passed on December 4, 1947. Its Article 78 states:

Freedom of conscience and religion, as well as freedom of performance of religious rituals is guaranteed to all citizens.

The Church is separated from the State.

A special law shall determine the legal status, the question of material support, and the right of internal autonomy and self-government of the various religious communities.

The misuse of church and religion for political purposes and the creation of political organizations on a religious basis is forbidden.

There is no mention of the status and functions of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. All questions pertaining to this Church, as well as to the minority denominations in the country, were left in abeyance until February 1949, when a general law on religious denominations was passed on the strength of the cited constitutional provision (*infra*, B). This law did, among other things, mention the Bulgarian Church. This law is analyzed and translated in the next Section B.

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(viel) for women, and the change from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet.

These fundamental reforms provoked a schism at first, and for a long time Mustafa Kemal and his followers were considered infidels by other Moslems. The Bulgarian Government, keenly aware of the potential menace presented by the compact and numerous Turkish minority, was only too happy to exploit this schism, which caused the Turks in Bulgaria to turn away from Ankara and Constantinople.

Bulgaria refused to exert any pressure on the Moslem minority to force it to organize its social and religious life along the lines advocated by the Kemalists. The Moslems were left entirely free to keep the Sheriat and the Arabic alphabet. Nothing was changed in the Turkish clergy and schools in Bulgaria. This was all the easier to effect because the separation of the Church and State, which is the core of the Kemalist reforms, had long been realized in Bulgaria by the very fact of the establishment of the Christian Bulgarian State side by side with an ethnically foreign Moslem minority.

Left entirely to itself, this minority, whose nationality and religion have always been scrupulously respected, organized itself on the basis of the Sheriat, which governed every phase of its civic and religious life, particularly in matrimonial matters - marriage and divorce (i. e., repudiation of the wife by the husband), as well as in the matters of inheritance.

This organization, which developed side by side with

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the Bulgarian State, was maintained by the Bulgarian authorities by means of the institution of the muftis, whose network covered all the Turkish-inhabited regions and which was centered at Sofia in the person of a Great Mufti, elected by the regional muftis. The Great Mufti was assisted by a Council elected by all the Moslems in the country. Thus, the Turkish minority not only enjoyed equal political rights with other citizens, but also was provided with a system of self-government concerning all matters regulated by the Sheriat. Such was the privileged position of the great Moslem community, which was able to support a considerable number of mosques (no less than two thousand) and schools (more than one thousand) and to publish several newspapers in its own language.

The Kamalists were extremely dissatisfied with this state of affairs. It frustrated the expansion of their reforms beyond the frontiers of Turkey. The Government in Sofia, however, took a firm stand and refused to change anything in the direction desired by Ankara. What was more, the Turks in Bulgaria, being a compact and a large group, were a source of votes for the politicians, who did much to raise their primitive standard of living. Great projects were carried out by the Bulgarian State over several years whose purpose it was to provide drinking water and irrigation for the arid region of Doliorman (Northeastern Bulgaria) predominantly populated by Turks.

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APPENDIX A
to Chapter IV

Elections of the Exarch in Detail

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The election of the Exarch was performed by a body consisting of both the representatives of the clergymen and the laymen parishioners. The mandates of some of these representatives of the clergymen and the laymen parishioners. The mandates of some of these representatives elected before expired in some dioceses but they were extended by government decree because the Diet (Sobranie, Decree having Force of Law for the Extension of the Mandates of the Lay and the Ecclesiastic Electors within each Diocese under Article 59 of the Statute of the Exarchate, Durzhaven Vestnik, No. 9, January 12, 1945). Since, furthermore, the Statute required the participation of the President and of the Vice-Presidents of the Diet which had been dissolved, the Council of Ministers passed a resolution replacing these two delegates with three representatives of the Fatherland Front coalition, because of the impossibility of holding legislative elections (Durzhaven Vestnik, No. 9, January 12, 1945). [67]

Needless to say, the representatives of the Fatherland Front played the most important part in the election.

The Communists had no use for an Exarch. They agreed to the election only under pressure from the other members of the coalition and under the expressed condition that the latter would, on their part, agree to the immediate introduction of

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civil marriage as obligatory, regardless of the Church's stand. That step was taken four months later.

There had always been three candidates to the Exarch's Tiara: Archbishop Stefan of Sofia, who had served as Archimandrite under the late Exarch Joseph, whose name and memory are worshipped in all Bulgarian lands; Archbishop Paisy of Vratza, who almost had himself elected during the war with the support of the Germans; and Archbishop Antim of Vidin, who, for a great number of years, had presided over the sessions of the Holy Synod, whose president, the Exarch, is ex officio.

Owing to the international situation of the country at the time under full soviet occupation, it could not be a question of electing Paisy and his candidacy was tacitly eliminated. There remained the choice between Antim and Stefan. The former had his longtime presidency of the Synod to his credit, while the latter enjoyed a certain priority under a general recommendation incorporated in the statute of the Exarchate in 1921. This recommendation stated that the new Exarch had to be the Archbishop of Sofia from which one may conclude that the Archbishop of Sofia would be the new Exarch. This was designed to facilitate the election of Mgr. Stefan as the candidate of the government at the time against Mgr. Antim, who, politically related to the radical party, was considered as a leftwinger and consequently as unacceptable to the dictatorship.

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But during the war, Mgr. Stefan, being an ardent Russophile, took a stand in favor of the allies and later, of the U.S.S.R.. This immediately brought him in close contact with the opposition, especially with the group Zveno and the Military League whose anti-governmental activities was encouraged by him. This also brought him closer to the soviets whose anti-religious policy he had criticized before the war. When the Patriarchate was restored in Russia, in 1943, he no longer had any reservation toward Moscow. When, in the fall of 1944, the coalition of the Fatherland Front was being formed, Mgr. Stefan adhered to it quite openly and in this quality was kept informed of all preparations for the Coup d'Etat of September 9, 1944, when Mgr. Antim remained loyal to the end to the national government and kept himself out of any active participation in politics.

Thus, Stefan was nominated by the Fatherland Front with the tacit consent of the Communists, who had little confidence in him. But on the one hand, they were not at all interested in the internal affairs of the Church and on the other hand, did not feel strong enough as yet to dictate to their partners concerning such matters. In January 1945, the Archbishop of Sofia was elected Exarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

The new Exarch was a political, rather than a religious figure. He demonstrated it the day of his election in the address which he made during the service at which he officiated,

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assisted by the other Archbishops, in the renovated old church of St. Sophia, dating back to Byzantine times. He presented himself as the choice of the Fatherland Front, which he defended and to whom he swore fealty, so to speak, before a numerous and well-selected audience from which the government was conspicuously absent. The communists had insisted on that latter point, not trusting the new Exarch's Anglo-Saxon sympathies. Stefan, who was a staunch anti-bolshevik before the war, had many ties in the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastic world and had been very active in the international organization, "Peace through Faith". Such activities could not but arouse the suspicion of the Bulgarian members of the Comintern. Furthermore, there is the prelate's political past. In 1934, he, in order to improve his position, supported the anti-royalist coup carried out by the group Zveno and the Military League. Then, when the King succeeded in liquidating the rebels and in establishing his own dictatorship, Mgr. Stefan went over to the Head of the State and thus acquired an omnipotent position with the Bulgarian Church. During the entire duration of the Royal dictatorship, he did not cease to uphold the cause of the Russian refugees in Bulgaria against the Moscow Government, attacking the latter in numerous articles, approved and even inspired by the Council of Ministers. Finally, the events of the second world war caused a general desertion of the sovereign; Mgr. Stefan, who hated him, abandoned him to seek the support of King Boris' sworn enemies, the group Zveno and the Military League. These elements had begun to prepare a new rebellion

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long before the King's death, which occurred in 1943. With such a past, he could hardly hope to gain the confidence of the communists. But, thinking himself a great politician, he hoped to be able to maneuver with the communists as he had done with his sovereign, from whom he had once hoped to be called upon to preside over the destinies of the nation.

However, after his election, he did take two intelligent and timely steps. On the one hand, the Patriarchate of Constantinople having renewed the advances which it had been making for some years toward the removal of the schism separating it from the Bulgarian Church, and these advances being favorably regarded by the Russian Patriarchate and by the Soviet Government, he interceded before the Fatherland Front in favor of and succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a delegation which would engage the necessary negotiations. As chairman of the delegation, he appointed a Macedonian prelate, the Archbishop of Nevrokop, Mgr. Boris (later assassinated by a communist priest of his diocese), who was to be assisted by Mgr. Andreij, Bishop of the Bulgarians in America, who was then temporarily in charge of the ghost of an Exarchate which Bulgaria was maintaining in Constantinople. And on the other hand, without waiting for the results of the negotiations, he went to Moscow to pay his respects to the Russian Patriarch Alexis and to place himself at the latter's disposal. This was in accordance with the international mission which the Politbureau has assigned to the Russian Orthodox Church, namely, the restoration of the former Russian influence, both religious and political, in the Middle and Near East. The lifting of the Greek-Bulgarian schism was a part of this program. In keeping with his

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ambitious nature, Mgr. Stefan wanted to play an important part in that scheme. That is why he offered his services to Alexis, whom he charmed and in whose person, moreover, he wanted to have a champion among the communists. Nevertheless, in doing so, he was also following the tradition established during the long period of the schism when the Russian Church had always supported the Bulgarian Church, for which the Bulgarians were quite thankful.

Alexis was soon to visit the Holy Land, and Stefan, who would have to pay a visit to the Patriarch in Constantinople after the lifting of the schism, suggested that that visit coincide with that of his big brother, on the latter's return from the Holy Land, in such fashion that the two would meet in Constantinople as guests of the Ecumenical Patriarch and affirm a soviet moral protectorate over the Eastern Orthodox Christians in the Orient, which was to facilitate the expansion of soviet political influence.

This scheme failed. The Turkish Government was highly disturbed by the announcement of Alexis' journey; and the Constantinople Patriarchate, fearing the consequences of the projected visit, asked the Moscow Patriarch to postpone it.

This was all taking place while the political group, known as the E.A.M. in Greece, which was communist dominated, still had hopes of seizing power through peaceful means, with the active support of the U.S.S.R., of course.

The negotiations with the Greek Patriarchate, which

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but refused to let himself be drawn into political matters by his religious superior. Besides, the latter died three months later, and his healthy influence on Greek-Bulgarian political reconciliation ceased. The U.S.S.R. supported this reconciliation very energetically, as the E.A.K., the Greek equivalent of the Bulgarian Fatherland Front, still thought it had a good chance of seizing power by peaceful means after its rebellion in the fall of 1944 had been bloodily and decisively repressed. The maneuver, if it had been successful, would probably have been of profit to the E.A.M.. But it would also have helped Greece and prevented the bloodshed of the three following years. In any event its failure caused the Soviet Government and the Bulgarian Communists to scrap the ecclesiastic policy which they had drawn up in 1944, and the central figure in which had been Mgr. Stefan. The latter immediately lost all the value which he had held for the communists which would enable him to maintain some independence of action as Head of the Bulgarian Church. Now the communists no longer had any use for him and still had all the old reasons to distrust him because of his authoritarian attitude. 648

In effect, his election to the Exarchate and his visit to Istanbul had inflated his ego to a point where he began to believe that he had become a great factor in the life of the country, and he wanted to play a part proportionate to that importance. But, since it was the Fatherland Front who had elected him, he was confronted with overgrowing demands from the 793 •

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government, which intended to make the church its tool, both in and out of the country, when it was rapidly becoming the center of opposition, especially after the suppression of the political opposition in the country. To these demands, Mgr. Stefan had to give satisfaction, albeit half-heartedly, and in so doing, he provoked the ire of both the clergy and the people. On the other hand, to complicate things further, he took a dim view of the activities of the Holy Synod, and wanted to decide everything alone.

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Thus, while he was in Istanbul, he informed Patriarch Benjamin of his intention to proclaim himself Patriarch in 1917 and invited him to send delegates to attend the ceremonies which he planned. In this he acted without consulting either the government of the Synod, and, quite naturally, both protested when he returned to Bulgaria and declared that they disagreed with him, and that they considered the transformation of the Exarchate into a Patriarchate an untimely step. The conflict which opposed him to the government on the one hand, and to the Holy Synod on the other hand, went from bad to worse, especially after the separation of Church and State had been decreed officially by the adoption of the new Constitution at the end of 1947. Mgr. Stefan thus literally found himself between the hammer and the anvil. Moreover, because of his personally aggressive attitude towards the other prelates, which made him attempt to dictate to his friends and to crush his opponents, the two forces finally joined against him. On

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September 6, 1948, following an incident with the communists, he saw himself placed in the position where he had to hand in his resignation to the Holy Synod which accepted it unanimously with the support of the government, which did nothing to prepare for the election of a new Exarch. The Holy Synod, taking full charge again of the Church, did more than accept the resignation of Mgr. Stefan. By applying the last amendment of the Statute of the Exarchat (Durzhaven Vestnik, No. 108, May 12, 1945) which definitely linked the office of the Exarch with that of the Archbishop Primate of Sofia, it deprived him of his diocese, reserved for the new Exarch, and relegated him as a virtual prisoner to the surroundings of the small provincial town of Karlovo, where the government permitted him to establish himself in a castle which had once been the property of the late King Boris. His health, by the way, was particularly precarious.

The decision of the Holy Synod really amounts to a deposition of the Exarch, rather than as an acceptance of his resignation. It was the revenge of the Synod, whom Mgr. Stefan had systematically ignored in his ambition to arrive at a personal and arbitrary rule over the Church, contrary to the very spirit of the Statute of the Exarchate, which had established the Bulgarian Church on an essentially democratic and national basis.

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795 religious organization. Faithful to its Byzantine origins, the
648 Greek Orthodox Church recognized (as we have previously
[793] noted) the Patriarch of Constantinople as its head, but ac-
cepted the Hierarchy of Greece as the center of ecclesiastical
power. This Hierarchy had, however, ruled that the Bulgarian
Orthodox Church was a schismatic body, and all pleas that its
decision be altered fell on deaf ears. When the war ended, the
Bulgarian Holy Synod met and elected the Metropolitan of
Sofia president and head of the Church with the title Exarch
Stephan I. He had long fished in the troubled waters of Bul-
garian politics and was widely known as an anti-Communist,
but now he began to manifest a zealous ardor in support of
Communism which virtually knew no bounds. When he made
representations to the Constantinople Patriarch that the curse
of schism be lifted from the Bulgarian Church, an affirmative
answer was received, owing no doubt to the weakness of the
Greeks and the peril in which they at that time found them-
selves.

Much going and coming ensued. Stephan journeyed to Kiev,
Moscow, and Leningrad. In turn the Patriarch of Moscow,
despite his eighty years, made an official visit to Bulgaria.
Not a few students of the situation reason that a plan had been
concocted to make the Patriarch of Moscow head of all the
Eastern Orthodox Churches, conferring a new and signal dis-
tinction upon the Russian capital, which would thus become
not only the world center of Communism but also the "Third
Rome," and manifestly rival the Vatican in importance as a
seat of ecclesiastical authority. The plan—if it actually ex-
isted—soon ceased to bear any relation to reality; but it is
interesting to conjecture as to what might have happened if
the Greeks had been absorbed into the Russian orbit.

All this had a complex and sometimes confusing historical
background. The services rendered by the Orthodox clergy

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domination of the State, clearly implied that Orthodoxy was C59
to have an opportunity to qualify as the "people's religion." C71
Note, for example, the language of Section 12:

Clergymen and other officials guilty of violating the laws, public order, or good morals, or of acting in a manner hostile to the democratic institutions of the State, may, over and above other applicable penalties, be provisionally suspended or removed from office on the request of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Upon receipt of such a request from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, suspension or removal from office shall be effected immediately by the leadership of the respective religious denomination. If the clergyman is not removed by the responsible leadership, he shall be removed by administrative order.

We shall now see how the legislation described was put into effect. C59
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In so far as the Orthodox Church is concerned, the story opens with the removal from office of Exarch Stephan I, who was said to be an overly ambitious prelate bent on skillfully juggling the disparate objects of Communist ideology and Christian tradition. Apparently Church and State agreed on his removal to the small town of Karlovo, the former because it deemed him too dictatorial and the latter because it no longer had any use for him. Ecclesiastical authority was lodged anew in the Holy Synod, which had already learned that the Communists took seriously ordinances abolishing religious marriage, prohibiting the teaching of religion in the schools, banning religious observances from military establishments, and subjecting the public to barrages of irreligious propaganda. Absolute dependence upon the State was associated with absolute surrender of traditional privileges.

It must be noted that the Exarch, during his tenure of office, had sounded almost every note in the scale which Dimitrov may have dreamed of as the ideal music for an ideal Church.

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RELIGION BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

653 Here is a brief report written by one who was an unhappy eye-
733 witness of the events described:

On the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia, the Exarch addressed a letter to all the Metropolitans in which he glorified the achievements of the Soviet Union. He also spoke glowingly of the role of the Slavic peoples in history. Finally he lauded Czechoslovakia and emphasized the need for very close relationships between Church and State. At about the same time, Marshal Tito visited Bulgaria, and the Exarch sent a telegram to Dimitrov in which he paid homage to the alliance between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and expressed the hope that these two great peoples would continue to foster mutual assistance. But the message also stressed the role which the Church had played in the history of the two countries. During the summer of 1947 the Exarch paid a visit to Carlsbad as the guest of the Czechoslovak Government, and took the cure there. During his stay he delivered an address in which he praised the Government of the country; and when the time came for him to enter his name in the Golden Book of the City of Prague he expressed gratitude for the honor and paid his respects to the "Slavic ideal and to the contributions it had made to the triumph of peace and justice in the world." He hailed the formation of the Cominform as a step towards the safeguarding of Slavic solidarity.

The Synod which succeeded to the authority of the Exarch was scarcely less supine. Despite the fact that the Communist Party had ordered that courses in dialectical materialism be offered in the seminaries which trained young men for the priesthood, it commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Lenin. It likewise instructed the clergy to accept membership in the Fatherland Front. The situation is illustrated by an émigré from Sofia, who relates that the editor of the principal Orthodox theological journal had approved an article in which the author expounded the thesis that natural science alone could not answer all questions. He was summoned to the Ministry and made to apologize profusely for the aber-

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ration. At any rate, the Holy Synod was soon reechoing every banal attack on Anglo-American imperialism and applauding every appeal for the Moscow version of "peace." In the summer of 1949, its official journal expressed regret that the center of Roman-Catholicism (the Vatican) and the heartland of Protestantism (the United States) had of their own free will blessed a new war and sung the praises of the atomic bomb.

These various attitudes received final binding expression in the series of resolutions on relations between Church and State which the Holy Synod adopted on September 20, 1948: the clergy were authorized to join pro-Communist organizations and to support the collective farm system; government decrees prohibiting the teaching of religion in the schools were endorsed; all priests were warned not to make any statement from their pulpits which might be considered to be political. The Synod assured the government that it stood ready to cooperate in any measure "for the reform of society in accordance with the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity." For the seventieth birthday of Stalin it addressed a letter, dated December 12, 1949, to all pastors urging them to conduct Divine services for the welfare of the great Russian leader. It also formally endorsed the peace plea with all its might and main.

Yet all this does not mean that the rank and file of the Bulgarian Orthodox clergy betrayed their faith without a struggle. It took the pro-Communist Union of Orthodox Priests a long while to recruit members. Watched constantly by the security police, removed from office for dissident attitudes, often sent to slave-labor camps, the clergy witnessed with foreboding the working out of policies designed to seduce youth, secularize all welfare activity, and subject all preaching, whether oral or written, to censorship by an uncompromisingly Marxist ideological authority. Eventually only one theological school, at Plovdiv, was permitted to remain open. Two theological jour-

653 nals, one of them the organ of the Communist-dominated
● 793 Synod, made propaganda at the government's behest. Every-
626 one who gave any indication of fidelity to the Christian creed
in its true significance and glory had to reckon with the possi-
bility that he would speedily be sentenced to one of the dreaded
prisons—Kolarovgrad, for example—which were always
crammed with the unfortunate victims of tyranny.

653 The Orthodox Church having been transformed into an ab-
798 ject lackey of the State, Communist wrath descended on the
religious minorities. Protestants were the first victims. Mis-
sionaries had come to Bulgaria from Turkey, and had estab-
lished schools which, despite wars and upheavals, gave a good
education to boys and girls. An exemplary woman introduced
the kindergarten system and trained native teachers. By the
close of World War I, hostility to Protestants had pretty largely
died down; and although the small congregations did not grow
rapidly they successfully maintained their identities. Their
pride and joy was the American College, situated near Sofia.
It was closed by the Nazis in 1942 and has not been reopened.
The work of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. was suppressed at
the same time, and the Communist regime has not lifted the
prohibition.

637 The legislation adopted during February, 1949 (often re-
ferred to as the Canonical Purity Laws) contained a number
648 of provisions designed to render impossible any religious ac-
tivity under the auspices of a Church or institution with head-
quarters outside Bulgaria. It stipulated, for example, that any
Church or any clergyman desiring "canonical relations with
or aid or gifts from" institutions, organizations, or official per-
sonages abroad must secure permission in advance from the
Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It was presumably under this
legislation that fifteen Protestant pastors were brought to trial
for high treason during 1949. It was the first large-scale action

735 on by the faithful, all actions detrimental to our People's Republic,
653 and anything which may threaten the independence and liberty of our
people. And we condemn such things even more strongly when they
are carried on by those who profess other creeds.

The statements made by the Catholic bishops, both of the Latin
and of the Greek rite, contained professions of loyalty to the
government but did not comment on the trial of their Protestant
brethren.

653 The Catholic Church wielded an influence in Bulgaria which
687 was wholly disproportionate to its size. Fewer than ten persons
793 in a thousand professed to belong to this Church, which of
course was also hampered by the division according to the two
rites. But Catholics had played a stirring part in the struggle
for liberation from Turkish rule, and so their heroes were
eminent in the nation's song and story. Educational institutions
created and developed by members of religious orders were
likewise held in high esteem, and many of the graduates were
prominent in the civil service and the professions. These insti-
tutions have been nationalized, and the Church itself is circum-
scribed by the laws affecting religion. During 1949, the Catho-
lic Bishops acceded to the government's request and sent a
message to the United Nations affirming the existence of re-
ligious freedom in Bulgaria. Subsequently the lot of both
clergy and laity grew steadily worse; but the first spectacular
and drastic action taken against the Church was the arrest of
a bishop, more than a score of priests, and a number of laymen,
on the usual charge of conspiring with a hostile foreign power.
The Bishop and three priests were sentenced to death for high
treason, and twenty-four priests and twelve laymen received
prison sentences. Therewith an almost mortal blow was struck
at the life and organized activity of the Church.*

000 * Most of the more than half a million Mohammedans in Bulgaria were of
Turkish descent. During 1950 the government began deporting them to Turkey,